



CAPITOL TIDBITS

by Sen. Bob McCaslin
4th Legislative District

February 4, 2005

Election challenge update

Chelan County Superior Court Judge John Bridges today heard arguments on the Democrat Party's motion to dismiss the Republican Party's election challenge. The judge denied the Democrats' request. Last week, Secretary of State Sam Reed filed court papers siding with Republicans on key legal issues in the lawsuit. Since the court first met on January 20, the Republican Party has filed briefs on its discovery and verification of 737 illegal votes.

SRC election reforms now fit into the following five themes:

- **Reregistration:** Cleansing the voter rolls by requiring legitimate voters to reregister and verify eligibility.
- **Identification:** Requiring eligible voters to present identification at the polls to ensure they are legitimate.
- **Standardization:** Developing statewide rules and standards so everyone's votes are handled in an equitable manner.
- **Reconciliation:** Making sure we have a voter for every vote cast.
- **Military accommodation:** Making sure our men and women protecting our country abroad can cast their votes in a timely manner.

Election Reform Task Force to hold public meetings

A task force on election reform, co-chaired by Secretary of State Sam Reed and former state Sen. Betti Sheldon, has scheduled four meetings to answer questions and receive comments from the public. Former state Sen. Larry Sheahan and former WSU President Sam Smith also serve on the task force. The meeting schedule is as follows:

Vancouver – 6:30-8:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, Clark College Foster Auditorium

Des Moines – 6 -8 p.m., Monday, Feb. 14, Highline Community College Student Union Building

Pasco – 6-8 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 16, Columbia Basin College Student Union Building

Spokane – 6-8 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 22, Spokane Community College Lair Student Center

AGENDA FOR WASHINGTON 2005

Washington State House & Senate Republicans: Moving Washington Forward

☑ Pass a no-new-taxes budget that protects vulnerable citizens

GOALS:

- Continue the Priorities of Government (POG) process and support a budget that lives within our means, doesn't raise taxes and maintains core services that protect vulnerable citizens.
- Require government programs be reviewed regularly for efficiency and effectiveness.

- Approve government liability reform that limits attorneys' fees so victims get more of the money they deserve, shifts to several liability so taxpayers only pay a fair share of the damages and limits awards of greater than \$1 million without legislative approval.

FACTS:

Washington's revenues are expected to increase by nearly 7 percent in this budget cycle, yet Democrats are already considering a tax increase to fund an additional increase in spending.

The Legislature solved a \$2.8 billion problem in 03-05 by prioritizing government spending. The same discipline can be used again this year to solve this problem without raising taxes.

State agencies will pay \$150 million this biennium into the self-insurance liability program, which pays tort claims against the state and related defense costs. That's enough to pay for 15,000 higher ed slots or a \$100 tax cut for every family in Washington.

☑ Create new jobs by making it easier to do business in Washington

GOALS:

- Exempt all small businesses from B&O tax for a year and new small businesses for two years.
- Double the small business B&O tax credit.
- Eliminate the registration burden for businesses not currently required to pay B&O taxes.
- Increase government accountability by requiring the governor to sign all major new rules, limiting agency rule-making to specific grants of legislative authority and delaying major rules until after a legislative session.
- Pass comprehensive workers' compensation reform.

FACTS:

The tax burden in Washington falls particularly hard on small business owners. Almost 50 percent of all taxes are paid by businesses, the highest percentage of any western state.

Total state regulation has expanded to fill 32 phonebook-sized volumes, forming a stack of paper more than five feet high. Employers spend valuable time and money trying to comply with everything – and that means less time and money for creating jobs.

Washington's workers' compensation system pays one of the highest levels of benefits in the country and it is forcing employers cut jobs.

☑ Control the cost of health Insurance and protect patient choices

GOALS:

- Allow insurers to provide affordable packages, tailored to meet the needs of employers, employees and their families.
- Allow state employees more choice and control by directing the Public Employees Benefits Board to allow them to invest in Health Savings Accounts.

FACTS:

Nationally, health care spending grew almost 8 percent in 2003. It now makes up about 15 percent of the national economy.

The number of employers who offer health insurance has dropped from 65 percent in 1993 to just 47 percent today.

☑ Protect citizens' rights for a fair election

GOAL:

- Pass comprehensive election reforms to deal with provisional ballots, illegal votes, votes without voters, disenfranchised military voters and partisan elections officers.

FACT:

In the aftermath of the 2004 elections, reports are surfacing about illegal votes, votes without voters and poor elections systems.